



# U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

PRESS RELEASE

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**NOTE TO ASSIGNMENT EDITORS AND NEWS DIRECTORS:** Highlights from Senator Mikulski's remarks are available for broadcast quality download.

*Audio highlights of Senator Mikulski's remarks available [here](#)*

*Video highlights of Senator Mikulski's remarks available in [SD](#) and [HD](#)*

## **CHAIRWOMAN MIKULSKI REBUTS INACCURATE REPUBLICAN TALKING POINTS, CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE VOTE IN HOUSE ON SENATE-PASSED CONTINUING FUNDING RESOLUTION**

*"Let's follow a regular order. Let's get back to the way government and this country should function," says Chairwoman*

*"Senate Democrats have tried to negotiate on the budget since we passed it on March 23, 2013."*

**WASHINGTON** – U.S. Senator Barbara A. Mikulski (D-Md.), Chairwoman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, today rebutted inaccurate Republican statements with regard to government shutdown today on the Senate floor. And Senator Mikulski again called for immediate House passage of the clean, short-term continuing funding resolution that passed the Senate eleven days ago and would enable the government to reopen. The Chairwoman's remarks as prepared for delivery are below:

*"I rise today to speak as the chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee who really would like to be able to reopen government and for our Committee to get back to regular order and to be able to move our appropriations bills. That means being able to debate them on the Senate floor, amend them on the floor, and go to conference to resolve either fiscal or other issues we might have with the House. But we can't do it because we are in lockdown politics.*

*"There are many things about where we find ourselves today that are very frustrating to me. And one of the main ones is the fact that the Tea Party Republicans are just out there saying things that simply are not accurate. Tea Party Republicans say that President Obama won't negotiate. That's not true. Tea Party Republicans are saying Democrats in the Senate won't negotiate. That's not true. Tea Party Republicans are saying that the Senate has not moved*

*appropriations bills. The Appropriations Committee absolutely has done that, so that's not true. Tea Party Republicans say the House doesn't have the votes to reopen the government. That's not true. And Tea Party Republicans say the debt limit is not a big deal. That's really not true.*

*"So let me elaborate on these point by point. Tea Party Republicans say President Obama won't negotiate. The President has negotiated time and time and time again. He had a framework for a grand bargain in his fiscal year 2014 budget. Read it. Let the print speak for itself. He had \$1.8 trillion of deficit reduction over 10 years, including \$400 billion in health care savings, \$200 billion in savings from mandatory programs, \$200 billion in further discretionary cuts, and yes, he even proposed to change the cost of living calculation for Social Security.*

*"But the Republicans couldn't take 'yes' for an answer. Here was President Obama, here was his budget, here's what he was offering, to reduce the debt, to take on mandatory spending, to take on discretionary spending. But they couldn't take 'yes' for an answer. The President included things in there that I didn't agree with, but it certainly was an offer to be discussed. And people should know that since Barack Obama became President, the deficit has gone down by 50 percent, from \$1.4 trillion in 2009 to an estimated \$700 billion in 2013. High, yes, but cut in half.*

*"Now, let's go to the talking point that this President won't negotiate. He negotiated in 2012, in December, on a fiscal cliff deal. He wanted a two-year delay in sequester but he got two months. He wanted tax cuts for the wealthy to be eliminated above \$250,000, but he agreed to \$450,000. On the estate tax exemption, he wanted a \$3.5 million exemption, the Republicans wanted \$5 million, he said okay. The two percent Social Security payroll tax holiday was ended without offsetting stimulus provisions.*

*"The President agreed to all of these compromises, and we supported him. But now, they say he won't negotiate. Speaker Boehner says we just want to have a conversation. But that's what the President did. What were those golf summits at Andrews Air Force Base? I thought that was going to be Kumbaya. The President has had private one-on-one meetings and nothing has come of it. Then he did a larger charm offensive. He had dinner with Republicans both at the White House and at different restaurants around town. But still, nobody seemed to be able to take 'yes' for an answer.*

*"This is a president who has invited people to the White House, invited leadership to play golf with him, to build relationships. He's had dinner here and there, but instead of having lunch with the President, they want to have his lunch. Over and over again. So the President has expressed a willingness time and again to negotiate. And where are we now? We need to reopen the government, the House needs to pass the Senate clean short-term continuing funding resolution and they need to raise the debt limit. Once the government is open for business, we can talk about other matters.*

*“Now let's go to Tea Party Republicans saying Democrats won't negotiate. Senate Democrats have tried to negotiate on the budget since we passed it on March 23, 2013. We were here for a marathon session led by Senator Murray, vote after vote, amendment after amendment and we passed a Budget Resolution. Now, the rules of engagement and the rules for dispute resolution in the United States Congress are that you take what the Senate passes and you take what the House passes and you meet in a conference to work out the differences.*

*“Senator Murray was ready to go. She asked permission, which you have to do under the rules of the Senate, to go to have her Budget Conference, to hammer out a final budget agreement with Paul Ryan and the other House members. Twenty times since March 23, Senator Murray has stood on this Senate floor and asked for the ability to go negotiate with the House. Twenty times she was blocked by six Tea Party Republicans. Twenty times she was blocked using the rules to protect the voice of the minority -- which I understand -- they used the filibuster to prohibit the Senate from going to meet with their House counterparts.*

*“Senate Democrats wanted to go negotiate. There's Paul Ryan, there's Patty Murray, let's have a Budget Conference and hammer it out. The Democrats have been ready to negotiate on a Budget Resolution since March 23, 2013. What do you mean, ‘let's just have a conversation?’ We've been trying to have that conversation since March. And who stopped us? Harry Reid didn't stop Patty Murray. Chuck Schumer didn't stop the Budget Committee. Barbara Mikulski is not stopping it. Six Tea Party Republicans have stopped the ability of the United States Senate to go to the House to negotiate a budget. Free the Budget Committee!*

*“Why is that so important? Because the Budget Committee not only comes up with an overall budget in discretionary spending, mandatory spending, and revenues, but they put a cap on appropriations. One of the things that comes out of a Budget Resolution is that it sets the total amount of money that the Appropriations Committee can spend on discretionary spending. To the shock of everybody, there is actually a cap on discretionary spending that is established by the Budget Committee. That's been the rule of the Budget Act going back to the 1970's. I would accept a cap that is agreed to by a duly constituted process established by the rules of the House and the Senate. That process is you pass a budget, you meet in conference, you come back, you give the appropriators what they call their cap, the 302(a), and it also sets levels for revenues and for mandatory spending.*

*“So when you hear Democrats won't negotiate, the Democrats have negotiated. Going into this situation we knew that the fiscal year expires on October 1, so the Senate put forth a bill, it came out of the Appropriations Committee. It was my suggestion that we would have a short-term funding resolution so we could deal with issues like the debt limit, like canceling sequester for two years, and what our funding cap should be for 2014. A short-term funding resolution, but with the goal of canceling the sequester.*

*“In order to get there, I was willing to compromise. I didn’t want to. I felt the House level was too harsh, too rough on important discretionary spending, but you know what, sometimes you’ve got to negotiate and you’ve got to compromise. So I was willing to compromise in order to get to negotiation. What was the compromise? The House has a level of \$986 billion. It follows the fiscal year 2013 post-sequester level. I felt the House’s \$986 billion was too low. The Senate bills were at \$1.058 trillion, so that’s over a \$70 billion reduction. But you know what, that’s what a conference is. That’s what negotiation is. So in order to get us across the dome into negotiation, I was willing to compromise, particularly on very important domestic spending.*

*“The liberals want to fund Head Start, and they want to fund NIH. Maybe we’re not liberals, maybe we’re just Americans. In my mind as an Appropriator, I’ve already compromised, just to get us into the room. But they won’t even take up the Senate-passed bill. They won’t take up the bill that Speaker Boehner said he would pass if we agreed to the \$986 billion level, their number, to get us into the room to talk. So if you tell the Senate ‘if you agree with us on this, just to get a short-term negotiation going, we’ll pass it’ and then you don’t, why should we believe that there will be any difference?*

*“But I want you to know as Chairwoman of the Appropriations Committee, I am ready to negotiate. I am ready to compromise. I’ve reached out to my House counterpart, the Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee. We have a marvelous, civil, candid relationship. We’re ready to go to work. We differ on money. There’s no doubt, the Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, Congressman Hal Rogers, is a wonderful gentleman, but I will tell you he is a rock-ribbed no-nonsense fiscal conservative. But that’s okay by Senator Barb because you know what? That’s what compromise is. That’s doing what Colin Powell asked us to do. Let’s talk things over. Let’s find that sensible center. Let’s make sure we run the United States government in a smart, frugal, effective way. That’s what it would take, and, you know what? We’re ready to do it.*

*“But we need Speaker Boehner to pass the short-term continuing funding resolution so we can get into the room to do this. So when you say, Senate Democrats won’t negotiate or won’t compromise, it’s not true. Also, I heard the Junior Senator from Kentucky say that the Senate hasn’t approved appropriations bills. The Appropriations Committee, despite being hamstrung by not having a budget, reported 11 appropriations bills. Eight of them were supported by Republicans. By August 1, our Appropriations Committee had marked up every single bill except one—Interior. Eight of them had bipartisan support. Three did not. They were LaborHHS, Financial Services, and the Legislative Branch. Why didn’t we get bipartisan support on those? Because the Labor-HHS and Financial Services subcommittees play a role in funding Obamacare. There we go again. Don’t do anything that would fund Obamacare.*

*“Madam President, I’m so fed up with those riders, those poison-pill riders. You know, we could have done that here. We chose not to. I would like to see the comprehensive immigration bill passed. I didn’t put any riders on the appropriations bills coming out of the Senate. I would have liked to see a Farm Bill that Senator Stabenow, the gentle lady from Michigan, and Senator Roberts, the gentleman from Kansas have worked so hard on. They’ve worked wonderfully on a bipartisan Farm Bill. It was something really to be proud of in the Senate. I would have liked to attach that to the appropriations bills, but we decided no riders, nothing cute, nothing clever, no earmarks, nothing like that. Just straightforward money bills ready to go to conference.*

*“Unfortunately, we couldn’t get them to conference. But they passed in the Appropriations Committee. We are waiting to get to work. So I’m going to conclude by saying this: the Tea Party Republicans say they don’t have the votes in the House to reopen government. Give it a chance. Put the vote to the floor. If we win, government is reopened. If we lose, at least we offered a suggestion and we’ll get back to the drawing board. But the solution to reopening the government lies on Speaker Boehner’s desk. He says he wants to have a conversation. We say, pick it up, have the vote. And we say to our six Republican Senators who have blocked the Budget Committee, let the Budget Committee go to conference. Let Senator Patty Murray and Congressman Paul Ryan meet to resolve these issues. Let’s follow a regular order. Let’s get back to the way government and this country should function.”*

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